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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 002176

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/17/2017

TAGS: PREL PHUM KPAL EG IS  
SUBJECT: ISRAELIS APPROVE LIST OF 1,000 PALESTINIANS TO  
ENTER GAZA THROUGH KEREM SHALOM

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Gene A. Cretz, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) EU Border Assistance Mission Commander Lieutenant General Pietro Pistolese commented to the Ambassador July 16 that negotiations had broken down between Israel and Egypt over the return to Gaza of several thousand Palestinians stranded on the Egyptian side of the Rafah Crossing. According to Pistolese, after Israel and Egypt agreed last week that the Palestinians should use the Kerem Shalom crossing on the Egyptian-Israeli border in order to return to Gaza, Israel insisted that Egypt provide lists of 500 Palestinians at a time for security vetting. The agreement reportedly broke down after Israel rejected almost all of the people on the initial list of 500.

¶2. (C) PolCouns raised this issue with MOD Arab Affairs adviser David Hacham later the same day. (Note: Hacham serves as the day to day liaison between MOD and the Egyptians regarding Gaza.) Hacham said that Pistolese's report was inaccurate. According to Hacham, the discussions with Egypt broke down last week because the Egyptians reversed their position on the use of Kerem Shalom and instead recommended that the stranded Palestinians enter Gaza through Rafah, which the Israelis rejected. Hacham stated that the Egyptians had then returned to their earlier position on Kerem Shalom, adding that he had just passed the Egyptians a list of 1,000 Palestinians (out of about 1,800 names submitted by Egypt) whom Israel had approved to cross into Gaza through Kerem Shalom. Hacham noted, however, that Hamas continued to oppose Palestinians entering Gaza through Kerem Shalom, so he was unsure whether the agreement would be implemented.

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